

IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 870

**TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY MATCHETT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF POLICE UNIONS
AFSCME, COUNCIL 15**

**BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE OF
THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

MARCH 4, 2013

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, my name is Jeffrey Matchett and I am Executive Director with AFSCME Council 15, a labor union representing the interests of almost 4000 police officers in 60 municipal communities throughout Connecticut.

I am here today to speak in support of the following bills before this Committee:

SENATE BILL 870 - AN ACT CONCERNING VICTIM COMPENSATION

The changes proposed by this Bill are necessary to make federal victims compensation funds, which are provided by the United States Department of Justice, available to the Sandy Hook first responders who have suffered from mental and emotional trauma as a result of responding to the massacre at Sandy Hook on December 14, 2012.

After that tragedy occurred almost three months ago, we began working to secure funding for our members who we knew would miss time from work after witnessing the events that day. We contacted Linda Cimino at the state Office of Victims Services who alerted us that while federal funding might be available, the state statute which allowed for distribution would exclude our first responders because none of them had suffered a physical injury.

The bill as drafted would allow our members access to those federal funds, provided that the incident is considered an incident of "domestic terrorism." We would prefer that such an uncertainty be put to rest by allowing the distribution of funds to those who suffer emotional distress regardless of whether it is attendant to a physical injury or a threat of physical injury. While a handful of our members were threatened with physical injury or death in their response to Sandy Hook, not all who suffered severe emotional trauma were under such threat.

We would ask for a modification to the language to allow all of our members access to the available funds.